

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

CELEBRATION

OF THE

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF

GRAFTON, MASS.,

APRIL 29, 1885.

BY

FRANK P. GOULDING.

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Worcester:

PRESS OF CHARLES HAMILTON,

311 MAIN STREET.

1886.

A D D R E S S .

THE love of kindred is a sentiment large enough to include and account for that reverence and affection which we feel for those of our ancestors whose forms vanished from earth long before our own time. That sentiment is not altogether dependent upon personal presence, nor upon the mutual exchange of kindly offices, but abides with us as a permanent and elementary principle of our nature. We find it impossible, therefore, to repress a feeling of deep and intimate concern in the history of a community of which our ancestors formed a part; and if, perchance, the characters with whom we are dealing were cast in a heroic mould, or were great and happy in their fortunes and achievements, they become in a peculiar sense,—

“The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.”

One hundred and fifty years have now passed since the incorporation of this town. You select this as a fitting occasion to recall the memory of the fathers who laid the foundation of these institutions into which you were born. You would revert once more to the early scenes in which they played their part; would remember their virtues; would sympathize with their patient toils, and admire the courage and fortitude with which

they encountered the perils and endured the hardships of frontier life; would applaud the clearness with which they saw, and the dauntless resolution with which they maintained their rights; would recognize, with gratitude, their steady and unswerving devotion to the principles of civil liberty, and the constancy with which they persevered, against every discouragement, in establishing those principles upon the secure basis of public education and public morality. But, upon this occasion, the historical theme which irresistibly attracts, at the same time, from obvious considerations, strongly repels me. The field has been so recently traversed and so amply covered, that, in attempting to recite anew any part of the familiar story, I shall appear to repeat a thrice-told tale. In 1835, at the centennial celebration of this event, an eminent native of the town skilfully gathered the scattered and scanty materials which constitute its original early history, and presented them in an address, which is at once the best authority upon the subject it treats of, and an able and statesmanlike survey, not only of the historical facts of the period covered, but also of the underlying forces and principles which made possible the great progress it recorded.

And, at the centennial celebration of the nation's birth, in 1876, another son of the town reviewed the same ground, and, in fluent narrative and eloquent speech, brought down the history to the present time, and rendered superfluous any further treatment of the subject. And, later still, in his excellent history, composed for the county history, in 1879, Rev. Mr. Windsor told again the

simple, but interesting story, and placed in permanent and easily accessible form all that can be known of the events which marked the dawn and early progress of civilization within the territory of Grafton. Besides these treatises there remain the fine historical discourse of Rev. Mr. Wilson, preached in 1846, covering the ecclesiastical history of the town, — no unimportant part of the early history of any Massachusetts town, which can boast a hundred years of life, — as well as the town history of Mr. Pierce. From these various essays in the annals of this venerable municipality you must have derived such familiarity with the initial steps and later advance of this community that I shall feel at liberty to select such parts of our history, without regard to consecutive narrative, as shall seem best to subserve the general purpose I have in view, to wit: to attempt some estimate of the character and environment of the early fathers of the town, and to assign some of the causes which made them what they were. But it may be of interest to repeat some portion of the history of the region prior to the settlement by the English.

At what time the first white man's eye ever gazed upon, or the first white man's foot ever pressed this territory, abounding in "rich land and plenty of meadows," it is wholly impossible to tell. It certainly requires some exercise of the imagination to conceive that Governor Winthrop and his party, who, on January 27, 1631, ascended a high rock only eight miles westerly of Watertown, "where they might see all of Neipnett and a very high hill due west about forty miles," could see from

that point any part of the present territory of Grafton ; and as for the supposition that the company of English who, in 1635, emigrated from Massachusetts Bay to Connecticut, traversed this territory, the probabilities are strongly against it. For the road to Connecticut, soon after existing, certainly lay to the north, though near the territory of Hassanamesitt, and passed north of Lake Quinsigamond, and there is little reason to suppose that, when that road was established, a new trail was struck out, instead of following the route of the first explorers.

But, however that may be, the territory emerges out of the darkness of barbarism into the view of history many years before its corporate name was conferred upon it, in honor of the second Duke of Grafton. In the middle of the preceding century, when the royal grandfather of that nobleman was skulking, crownless, on the continent of Europe, and before he had formed his scandalous alliance with the beautiful but profligate Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, who was our namesake's grandmother, and while the imperial sceptre of England was held in the firm grasp of Oliver Cromwell, the general court of the province, on the petition of Eliot, set apart the territory of Hassanamesitt for the use of the Indians. Here was formed the third of the towns of the praying or Christian Indians, Natick and Pakemitt or Punkapoag (a part of Stoughton) being the first two; and here, in 1671, was organized the second Indian church. Upon the organization of the church, a meeting-house was erected, the site of which, near the old Indian burying-ground, in the vicinity of Mr. Frederick

Jourdan's place, is still pointed out. A school was also established, where youth were educated to preach the Gospel to the Indians in the neighboring towns. Of course the services of the church were conducted in the Indian language, and there is ample proof in the writings of Eliot, as well as in those of Major Gookin, the Indian commissioner of those days, that, under the dusky skin of those primitive congregations, lurked traits of human nature common to all complexions. I cannot stop to give more than a single example of the numerous shrewd and difficult questions which his Indian disciples put to the pious Mr. Eliot. In his letters to the corporation established in London for the propagation of the Gospel among the Indians, he gives, in great abundance, examples of these queries; but he does not give his answer to the following, among others:—

“If God made hell in one of the six days, why did God make hell before Adam sinned?”

Gookin says of these Indians, whom he saw attending upon the preaching in the churches: “And for my part I have no doubt, but am fully satisfied, according to the judgment of charity, that divers of them do fear God and are believers; but yet I will not deny but that there may be some hypocrites that profess religion and yet are not sound-hearted. But things that are secret belong to God, and things that are revealed unto us and our children.”

Wattascompanum, the chief ruler of the whole Nipmuck country, resided here. He was said to be “a grave and pious man.” It is probably no impeachment

of his gravity or piety that he was executed in Boston in June, 1677. For his crime was that he had been induced or forced to join the party of his countrymen in a desperate and futile attempt to drive from their ancient domain the ever-encroaching pale-faces, in whose insidious advance the prophetic souls of the natives read the doom of their own race. And popular feeling ran so high against the Indians at the close of that sanguinary war, that small measure of justice was likely to be meted out to a native who had yielded to the blandishments or threats of the foe.

In proof that these obscure natives who once occupied this vicinity were not destitute of all the amenities of civilized life, I must not omit to mention that here, two hundred and fifteen years ago, occurred the first seizure of liquor in this county, under process of law, of which I have discovered any record. It appears that Petavit, otherwise called Robin, was one of the magistrates or rulers here at Hassanamesitt, and he was, evidently, a magistrate not easily deterred from the performance of his official duty. Major Gookin gives an account of the seizure of the liquor, as follows: "I remember sundry years since a Sagamore that lived up in the inland country came to Hassanamesitt, and brought with him a rundlett of strong liquor — [it was more than three per cent. alcohol, and could not be palmed off for Schenk beer], and, lodging in his house, Petavit, in the morn, sent for the constable, and ordered him, and, according to law, seized the rundlett of liquors. At which act the Sagamore drew a long knife and stood with his foot on

the rundlett, daring any to seize it. But Petavit thereupon rose up and drew his knife, and set his foot also to the rundlett, and commanded the constable to do his office. And the Sagamore—

Here the ancient manuscript breaks off, like a serial novel, in the very crisis of a thrilling scene. We see a sudden flash of long knives in the morning sun, and the curtain falls. We shall never know with certainty what the issue was. But, considering the divinity that doth hedge a magistrate, and the dauntless and resolute temper of Mr. Justice Petavit *alias* Robin, I hasten to assure you that, in my opinion, the Sagamore from the inland country, after growling out sundry phrases in the Indian dialect, not strictly in accordance with the discipline of the church then established at Hassanamesitt, restored his long knife to his belt, removed his moccason from the rundlett, and yielded to the inevitable.

The war with King Philip was disastrous to the promising enterprise of bringing the Nipmucks under English and Christian influences, and upon no part of the extended and undefined domain of that people did it fall more fatally than upon Hassanamesitt. Two engagements were fought in this territory,—one not certainly located, and the other on Keith Hill. The first engagement resulted in a repulse of the company of English under Capt. Henchman, with a loss of two of his men. Mr. Brigham says, on the authority of the Gookin manuscript, published by the American Antiquarian Society, that upon the return of the English the next morning to the scene of the conflict, they discovered the heads of

their two men who had fallen in the attack placed on crotched poles before the wigwam, and facing each other. But, as given in a note to Drake's edition of Hubbard's narrative, Gookin's account of it is as follows: "Capt. Henschman told me he judged several of the Enemy were slain in the wigwam, but the certainty is not known; but it was certain he lost two of his men, whereof his Lieutenant was one, Philip Curtice of Roxbury, a stout man. His Hands they cut off and placed upon a crotched Pole at the Wigwam Door, faced each other, which was seen a few days after." It may not be of much importance, but if the note in Drake's Hubbard is authentic in its citation of General Gookin's manuscript, it would appear certain it was the hands of the stout (*i. e.* valiant) Lieut. Curtice, and not the heads of the slain, which were the subject of the ghastly humor of the savages. There is some confusion and contradiction in the original authorities respecting the battle on Keith Hill. According to Hubbard it occurred on May 6, and according to Drake, on May 5, 1676. The English were accompanied by some Natick Indian allies, and these allies came upon the hostiles who were pursuing a bear. They did not perceive at first that the Natick Indians were not of their own party, which gave the English some advantage. From eleven to sixteen Indians were slain. Dr. Mather says "our Forces had probably destroyed many more of them had not an Englishman unhappily sounded a Trumpet, whereby the enemy had notice to escape."*

* *Mather, Brief Hist.*, 143. This was the first time the Natick Indians were employed in any such number by the Government.—*Drake*, 257.

But while the devastation of battle cannot be said to have swept the place with special violence, in other ways the desolate track of war was left deeply imprinted on its soil. For, through the intrigue and force of the hostile savages, the little Indian town whose bright promise had filled the inspired Eliot, and the resolute, but humane Gookin, with such high hopes, was completely broken up and dispersed. The church and school were never rehabilitated, and only a few of the surviving natives, after an interval of many years, straggled back to the desolate scenes of the old settlement, and took up again their abode on the land of their fathers.

In 1718, a single white man had acquired title to some lands in the town, and in 1727-8, the title to the whole original territory of Hassanamesitt resided in seven individuals, who were descendants of the original native proprietors under the reservation of 1654, and in nine English families, who, under permission of the general court, had purchased lands and settled here. In that year was granted by the general court the petition of forty English families, preferred some time before, to purchase the entire reservation of 7500 acres from the Indians, with certain restrictions. And, thereupon, a deed was given, dated March 19, 1727, old style, and it is executed by the seven proprietors and the husband of one of them. It reserves the previous grants to the earlier white proprietors, and to the Indian grantors an equal dividend of land with each of the grantees, and one hundred acres besides for the use of the Indians. It is in the nature of a strict entailment, for it is, by its terms, a

grant for the settlement of forty English families of the petitioners or their posterity, and no others. By an act of the general court, passed at the same time, certain conditions were coupled with the grant, the most important of which were,—

That within the space of three years they build and furnish a meeting-house for the instruction as well of the Indians as English children; that they settle a learned Orthodox minister to preach the gospel to them, and constantly maintain and duly support a minister and schoolmaster among them, and all this without charge to the Indians.

The expense of building the meeting-house and school-house was imposed, by the same act, four-fifths upon the purchasers and one-fifth on the prior English settlers, who were likewise required to contribute to the maintenance of the minister and schoolmaster. The English purchasers under this deed immediately proceeded to execute its conditions, and, almost before the ink was dry upon the parchment, and months before it was recorded, the proprietors made provision for the location of the meeting-house and school-house, and only a little later began the allotment of lands, and as early as 1730, the meeting-house was completed, and a large portion of the forty families had removed here, and, in the following year, the church was regularly organized and a minister duly installed.

Although the day we celebrate, April 18-29, 1735, is the date of the legal incorporation of the inhabitants with the powers and privileges of a town, the true era

of the permanent settlement of the place by the English must be referred to the years 1730 or 1731. We have now reached the period when first came upon this scene the men and women by whose characters and deeds the first bias and direction was given to the history of this community. There is a certain unity and individuality of type belonging to every community, if we only had the art to discover it. And it will be found to be a reproduction of the type of character which predominated in the leading founders of the community. Of course there will be no community without concurrence of sentiment, and the masses will finally concur with the minds of the strongest and most positive cast of character. The first settlers of a town, surviving for a generation, will generally set the current of popular thought and feeling, and establish the polity of that town for generations to come.

In that view, and in all views, it will be of interest to inquire who these emigrants were; what they did and what they aimed to do; what they thought; what they hoped; what they believed; and, in short, what manner of men and women they were. It will be of interest to inquire what were some of the causes which enabled them to establish so goodly a heritage for their children, and to instil principles into the minds and hearts of their successors, which made of them heroes in their turn, and enabled them, in common with the inhabitants of other towns and States, to set examples of wisdom in counsel and courage in action, not surpassed by anything in the annals of man.

They were forty English families, who, with the nine who had but a short time preceded them, made up about fifty families. Most of them, perhaps nearly all, were born in the province, and were, therefore, Englishmen in the sense that they were born of English parentage in the English provinces of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth. If I should repeat their names many of you would hear your own names, and I should probably name few, if any, who have not some lineal descendant within sound of my voice. They came unheralded by any noise of trumpets, blazon of fireworks, or other demonstration of human interest. When their creaking carts, loaded with the scanty supply of furniture which was all-sufficient for the simple wants of their lives, rolled slowly up these hills and into these valleys, guided by marked trees through the primeval forests, without doubt the wolves and bears regarded the invasion as very important and revolutionary, and the owls peered down at night upon the fires of the settlers with looks of ominous conjecture.

But the human owls, seated in the high places of England, could not see so far, and had no idea of what was taking place here, and in some hundred other places where the like things were transpiring. Outside the few towns whence they came (Sudbury, Concord, Wrentham, Stow, Marlboro), the event had absolutely no significance. When three or four years later the town was incorporated and christened with an English name, Gov. Belcher may have mentioned, in a letter to the Duke of Grafton, that he had named a little township after him

up in the woods of central Massachusetts Bay, and his grace may have jocosely told it to his friend, Sir Robert Walpole, the prime minister, of whose son Horace, the great letter-writer, the Duke of Grafton was the god-father. There is a remote possibility that the king himself, the "snuffy old drone from the German hive," may have mentioned it to the Duchess of Kendall as an item of news from the distant province. But the advent of our fathers to these fields had about as much significance to the people of England, who supposed they themselves were making the history of the time, as the movements of a nomad tribe in central Asia for a change of pasturage would have to us to-day. Nor have the circumstances of their coming attracted the attention of mankind since. The poet and the orator have not found in their special history a theme worthy their efforts. They did not flee from religious or political persecution, nor traverse wide and stormy seas to find, on a desolate coast, an asylum in which to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. At the end of the first third of the eighteenth century, religious persecution of protestants had ceased in England, and the first settlers in this town were in full sympathy and entire accord with the people of the communities they left, both in politics and religion. If they endured hardships, they endured them in common with the early settlers of one hundred and twenty-five other towns in the province, settled and incorporated before ours. I shall not, therefore, claim that these early settlers of Hassaname-sitt are to be selected and set on any pedestal over the

heads of the primitive inhabitants of other towns. The greatness I claim for them they shared in common with many other similar communities of the same race and time, and it is sufficient glory that they are eminent among equals. But it detracts nothing from the intrinsic interest of their characters that the chief features they present are repeated in a hundred other communities. It detracts nothing from the importance of the experience they went through that it is not dissimilar to that of other neighboring peoples who settled other towns. The fact is, representative constitutional government was first invented and put into practical operation in this province, and it first manifested itself in the little autonomies of the towns. It is the people of one of these towns to which I would call your attention, and one where I believe will be found a remarkably pure and perfect type of the kind of communities which were then taking root everywhere in New England. They were representative New Englanders of the first half of the eighteenth century, and as such were enacting the most important history which was then transpiring on this round earth. Indeed, what human interest attaches to the quarrels of Walpole and Bolingbroke, or to the corrupt sway of the former after his full accession to power; to the history of the South-sea Bubble; to the intrigues and uprisings of the exiled Stuarts to regain their ancient throne; to the petty wars of the first Georges, or to the endless plots and counterplots of whigs and tories, as compared with the scenes which were unfolding on this continent, and mainly within these old provinces,

now Massachusetts, from 1720 to 1789? The men and women who came to Grafton to settle were, like their neighbors, the heirs and successors of those heroic men and women who, in the preceding century, had encountered the first perils attendant on establishing a foothold for civilization on this continent.

They had drunk deep of the spirit of the great conflict with the Stuarts, which ended with the revolution of 1688, whereby the liberties of Protestant Englishmen everywhere, as they believed, were forever established. In the first place, they were men of eminently sound, practical common sense. You cannot open a page of their records, or trace the faded leaves of the church proceedings without receiving the impression at the outset and carrying it with you to the end, that first of all here was a race of men perfectly sound-minded, level-headed, and intent upon the practical affairs of life. This Saxon good sense and business capacity is the chief feature of their character, subordinating all others. I know it is common to ascribe to colonial settlers of pre-revolutionary days, and to these our fathers, as the predominant trait of their characters, devotion to religion. I do not dissent from the estimate which gives that element a prominent and controlling place. But in religious zeal they have been surpassed by many races. I believe our good friends the Catholics of the Irish race have, on a thousand fields, shown a devotion to the faith of their fathers as great as any the early settlers of this country ever displayed. And Spaniards and Frenchmen and Netherlanders and Germans and Turks and Africans

have, in all times, displayed a zeal which would rival and eclipse that of our fathers who settled here. When Mr. Wilson in the excellent discourse I before referred to says that these "grave pioneers, cherishing the same religious zeal which characterized the primitive colonists of New England, made it their first care to provide for the worship of God; that their first vote at their first meeting relates to the selection of a proper situation for the house of prayer," he tells but half the story, and the impression conveyed is misleading. They do first attend to the building of a meeting-house. The fact is so. But it is also a fact that precisely that was the first condition in their deed, to wit: that they complete a meeting-house in three years. Their whole title depended upon that strict condition. Like business men, therefore, they set about doing the thing necessary to be done at once to prevent a forfeiture. It was an act most characteristic. But it was characteristic of sensible men of affairs, who exactly understood the nature of their grant, and went about complying with its conditions. It was a practical business transaction, and the record of the second meeting of the proprietors at the house of Nehemiah How, here in Hassanamesitt, on April 19-30, 1728, one hundred and fifty-seven years ago to-morrow, when they adjourned once and again, and examined and re-examined the proposed sites and shifted from one to the other until, after mature consideration, they were satisfied that the location would be "accommodable," furnishes a strong illustration of the very trait of character I am now insisting on, a sturdy practical sense, the faculty

to adapt means to ends. I should be sorry to be misunderstood. These pioneers, as a general thing were professors of, and profound believers in, religion. The conditions on which their grant was made undoubtedly received their hearty concurrence. But none of them were religious zealots, and they were not all of them saints, and they knew their own hearts too well to pretend to be, and neither they nor the general court felt it to be safe to trust the institution and maintenance of religious worship to anything less secure than the express and rigid condition of the deed itself. The policy of maintaining the ordinances of religion, as well as public education, was the settled policy of the provinces, and these emigrants believed in it. There was nothing impulsive or sensational in their conduct, but all was well considered, deliberate, and eminently worldly wise.

They were, moreover, an industrious people. They came here as a chief end to better their material wealth; to get on in life.* Mr. Brigham has noted at how extravagant an estimate they held their lands, and how they gloried in the idea that they should leave so valuable an inheritance to their children. He reckons ill who leaves out of the account of the early New England settlers the fact that they were intent upon honest gain. They desired and expected to increase their stores, and to acquire moderate independence. Love of money is said to be the root of all evil, but the hope of acquiring it has sustained many brave hearts in the midst of trials. The

* See curious pamphlet on New England, by Rev. — Higginson; 1 Mass. Hist. Coll., First Series, 117.

early settlers in this town, like most of their contemporaries, had a dim consciousness of the coming greatness of this country. Of course, they knew nothing of the vast resources that lay slumbering in the heart of the continent, and had no correct notion of the real wealth in store for the succeeding generations. But they believed in the boundless productiveness of the soil, and indulged visions of remuneration for their toil of a kind and degree destined never to be realized. They were, indeed, a deeply religious people. They were Puritans without being fanatics. They were Congregationalists and Calvinists. It is evident, however, as well from their church covenant as from the dissensions and differences of opinion which arose within a few years, that they held the tenets of their creed with liberality and a tolerant spirit, and with some conception of the rights of others, as well as their own, to private judgment in matters spiritual. They were, for the age in which they lived, progressive. I am strongly inclined to think that there was a greater degree of liberality of views among the original settlers in respect to religious matters at first than later. After the divisions which arose in 1745 and 1746 in regard to Mr. Prentice, the first pastor, that happened which usually happens in case of religious schism. Each sect draws the lines of its peculiar belief more rigidly than before, and the minor differences which occasioned the division become the principal and sacred essentials of doctrine.

At any rate, we know that the church creed was revised and made more definitely Calvinistic under the

second minister, Mr. Hutchinson, in accordance with the views of that very able and most logical and uncompromising sectarian. That these people were of a courageous disposition, worthy of their ancestors and of their posterity, needs no evidence to verify. They inherited from their fathers the courage of warriors, and it is not unlikely that some of the first founders of the town had faced the enemy in battle. The war of the Spanish succession, or Queen Anne's war, which broke out in 1702, and continued a number of years, so far as this country is concerned, fell with especial fury upon the colony of Massachusetts Bay. The neutrality of the Five Nations protected New York and the central colonies. The province of Massachusetts Bay was desolated, and for her (says Bancroft) "the history of the war is but a catalogue of miseries."

All along the borders of Maine, then a part of Massachusetts, the cloud of war hung black as death. And, nearer home, Deerfield was burnt and its inhabitants massacred in 1704, and Haverhill shared the same fate in 1708. For eleven years the war raged till the treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The troubles respecting the eastern boundaries of the province, which arose about 1720, with the tribe of Abenaki Indians, lasted about four years, and the Indians who had embraced the Catholic faith under the teachings of the Jesuit Rasles, waged a war with Massachusetts, animated on both sides with much religious zeal (a circumstance which does not often mitigate the severities of war), which resulted in the success of our colony. These conflicts may have engaged

the personal participation of some of our settlers, and at any rate had made them familiar with the wrinkled front of grim-visaged war from their youth.

We can know but little of the personal appearance and daily life of these ancient pioneers, who first bore into your fair territory the seeds of civilized life. No photographer's art has preserved the lineaments of a single face. For the most part they were too poor to employ the brush of a painter to fix on the canvas the fleeting lines of their features, even if an artist had ever visited the region. I am bound to believe, however, that the men were of well-knit and vigorous frames, and possessed of no small share of manly beauty, and the women well endowed with the comely graces and endearing charms of their sex. If asked the grounds of this belief, standing among the descendants who bear their features by inheritance, I should answer "*Si monumentum quaeris, circumspice.*" If you want the proof look about you. It would be instructive and curious, if time permitted, to go into an examination of their daily lives, as affected by the implements, appliances and facilities they could command in the performance of their labor, and in providing the necessities of existence.

We, who live in this age of curious inventions and elegant devices of convenience, designed and adapted to facilitate labor and render delightful domestic life, can with difficulty realize the rude and scanty tools and implements and barren facilities with which they prosecuted the labors of the house and farm. In the article of dress, if we had the power to recall and materialize the

ancient worthies who assembled in yonder old meeting-house one hundred and fifty years ago; if we could look in upon them as through a window, what a source of infinite amusement and interest their quaint figures would excite!

A brilliant writer, describing a period fifty years later, gives a lively picture of the dress of the New-England farmer: "If the food of such a man was plain so were his clothes. Indeed, his wardrobe would by his descendants be thought scanty in the extreme. For meeting on a Sabbath and on state occasions during the week, he had a suit of broadcloth or corduroy, which lasted him a lifetime, and was at length bequeathed, little the worse for wear, with his cattle and his farm, to his son. The suit in which his neighbors commonly saw him, the suit in which he followed the plough, tended the cattle and dozed in the chimney corner, while Abigail or Comfort read to him from Edwards's Sermons, was of homespun or linsay-woolsey."* I am inclined to think this picture would be applicable to the farmers who settled Grafton, after deducting the broadcloth, corduroy, and Edwards's Sermons. And yet they were by no means destitute of all ideas of refinement, and most of them had seen glimpses of some of the elegancies of life.

It is quite likely that after a few years, at least, on the Sabbath and important occasions, some of the more well-to-do among them may have displayed garments more attractive than the ordinary sheepskin, deerskin, or coarse knee-breeches and frock. Some of the ladies

* McMaster's Hist. of the People of the United States, vol. 1, pages 18, 19.

may even have possessed a gown of silk. At any rate we shall presently see that there was one such garment in town. The periwig, which so scandalized the clergy of the preceding century, had established itself in fashion, and doubtless might have been seen here early, if not at the very first. Their education was not contemptible, as the records of their proceedings amply show. They had had the benefit of the long-established policy of the colony, which made public education the corner-stone of the State. They were familiar with Scripture and familiar with learned preaching. One of the conditions of their grant was that they should maintain a learned Orthodox minister. They complied with the condition by calling and settling in December, 1731, the Rev. Solomon Prentice, a young graduate of Harvard in the class of 1727, a classmate of Governors Hutchinson of Massachusetts Bay and Trumbull of Connecticut.

In the following year the young minister married Sarah Sartell of Groton, and his wife, sixteen years of age, is said to have been well qualified by her learning and ability to assume the important position of a pastor's wife. I have unmistakable evidence that even in those rude and primitive days, in the infancy of the settlement, the minister's wife was not wholly unacquainted with, nor indifferent to, the elegancies of refined life. For, among my heirlooms, I possess an ample fragment of an elegant dress which was the property of that lady. One tradition in the family describes it as her own wedding dress, but the better authenticated account is that it came from an aunt of hers, and was worn by its

former owner at the Court of George II. However that may be, it was undoubtedly worn by the fair lady herself, who was, I imagine, as well by her position as by her accomplishments, the leader of society here in those primitive days. As I look upon its beautiful texture, as perfectly preserved as when, one hundred and fifty years ago, it graced the person of the youthful lady, when I see its unfaded and lovely hues,—a bright canary-colored satin elegantly brocaded with flowers,—I am struck with the transitory nature of the things we here pursue. By the aid of this talisman I am enabled to look into the—

“Dark backward and abyss of time,”

and behold one of the figures that moved over these scenes when the curtain of history first rolled up and disclosed this section of the world's stage. For nearly a hundred years, after a long life, the mother and grandmother of a numerous posterity, she has slept in yonder ancient cemetery. There remain of her memory only a few fleeting and uncertain traditions, scarcely more in extent than the nearly obliterated inscription upon her tombstone. All the rest has fallen silent and is swallowed up in oblivion, but the frail and beautiful adornment which set off the charms of the stately young minister's wife remains. No shade of the cunningly-wrought design has become, in the least, dimmed with age. Every line of the delicate tracery, and every lovely variation of color, lives as clear as on the day it left the loom. Venerable ancestress! I salute you across the gulf of

years! Is it possible to believe that this delicate fabric, this tegument which became so intimately connected with her destiny, is all that survives of her, that all the rest is exhaled like the perfume of the flowers which bloomed a hundred years ago? No! at least she and her contemporaries, whose lives we are now trying to recall, live in the beneficent influence they exerted. It is not alone by hereditary transmission that the qualities and peculiarities of one generation reappear in another. We are creatures of imitation. The manners and individual peculiarities of a strong personality are reproduced by force of the instinct to imitate; and as some individuals of every generation are contemporaries of the next succeeding, the traits and habits of a vigorous and original character are continued and transmitted from age to age. The frail memorial, the curiously wrought fabric, is but a symbol of the graces of personal character which do not perish even from this life, when the tenement of clay dissolves, but survive —

“To the last syllable of recorded time.” *

The pastoral relation of Mr. Prentice was dissolved in 1747, by reason of troubles which had been brewing for two or three years. I do not propose to enter upon the subject of those troubles. It is enough to say that no impeachment of the integrity of Mr. Prentice was

* I regret that a story so destitute of probability as that relating to the domestic discord between Mr. and Mrs. Prentice, which Mr. Howe deemed worthy of a place in his excellent address, should have received an indorsement so respectable. The frequency with which the story has been applied to ancient couples, who were divided in opinion upon the special tenet of the Baptists, renders it quite too stale for adaptation to the cultivated and refined first pastor of Grafton, and his intelligent and spirited wife.

attempted, but it was his orthodoxy alone which was brought in question. It is essential for me to say that the records of this controversy, faithfully set down in the beautiful handwriting of Mr. Prentice himself, discloses a people of great independence of thought and character, desirous to do right, but by no means to be deterred by authority from asserting their just privileges and opinions. Mr. Prentice was succeeded by Rev. Aaron Hutchinson, a man of great power and great eccentricities, who remained till 1772, and, in 1774, Rev. Daniel Grosvenor succeeded him. A lady friend of mine has given me a brace of anecdotes told to her by Mr. Grosvenor himself, one of which well illustrates his sense of the humorous and his dislike of insincerity.

Mr. Grosvenor was dining with a lady of his parish, who was a cook of exquisite skill, and she placed before the pastor a delicious pie, of some kind, and as she helped him to a piece of it, she remarked that she hoped he would accept a piece of her *poor* pie. The minister tasted it with great gravity, and said "Poor pie! why, I call it a very *passable* pie." Whereupon the good lady was in high dudgeon. She declared she never took more pains with a pie, in the whole course of her life, and she did not believe there was ever a better pie made. Fishing for a compliment, she got caught with her own hook.

On another occasion the reverend gentleman called upon one of his parishoners, who, it being upon a washing day, and her dinner not being just what she would

desire to invite so august a personage as the minister to partake of, did not mean to extend to him the courtesy of an invitation. But the lady's mother, who was of the family, nevertheless, asked Mr. Grosvenor to stay. He accepted, and when his young hostess apologized for the quality of the repast, her mother made the following observation, which Mr. Grosvenor thought quite notable. She said there was no occasion for any apology; for, if Mr. Grosvenor was a good man, he would be content and thankful even with a poor dinner, and, if he was a bad man, it was good enough for him.

I have read a sermon preached by Mr. Hutchinson at Newbury in 1767, and the reply by him to certain strictures thereon, by the Rev. John Tucker, pastor of the first church in Newbury. This famous ecclesiastical controversy related to the necessity of infant baptism in order to insure salvation. It is hardly necessary to say that Mr. Hutchinson maintained the affirmative of that proposition. His discourses are marked by great familiarity with scriptural texts, much classical learning, fine controversial skill, and by a logic which may fairly be described as of deadly precision. Admit his premises, and you cannot escape his conclusions.

Mr. Hutchinson, like his great contemporary Dr. Samuel Johnson, coupled with great learning and ability, the manners of a bear. The president of the day,* who is the repository of all the history and anecdotes connected with the antiquities of the town, relates a story of Mr. Hutchinson illustrating his manners: He was

* Henry F. Wing, Esq.,

dining at a conference of ministers and helped himself to so large a portion of the pudding that there was little left on the platter. Thereupon one of his neighbors at the table helped himself from Mr. Hutchinson's plate, and when remonstrated with, remarked that he always helped himself from the largest pile.

I do not find in the ancient records of the town, anything to show whether the young settlement contributed men to the expedition which resulted in the brilliant conquest of Louisburg in 1745. To this enterprise, which owed its conception and execution to the energy of Governor Shirley, this province contributed more than three thousand men, and it is probable that in the ranks were found some residents of this town.

The treaty of Aix la Chapelle restored to the French the fortress which New-England valor had placed in English hands, and left the colonists to the long struggle which was in store for them, with their wily and cruel neighbors of the north; and the first war, after the settlement of the town, which arose to try the mettle of the inhabitants, was the French war, in which hostilities broke out in 1754. I have already referred to Queen Anne's war of fifty years before. It is undoubtedly true that the protracted struggle of the English colonists with the French and Indians along our extended northern frontier, from the mouth of the Saint Lawrence to the forks of the Ohio, furnished the training-school in which was raised the generation of soldiers who fought the battles of the Revolution. In the French war, Washington won his spurs, and many of the officers and

privates who met the British regulars on Bunker Hill, or penetrated the thick forests of Canada, and crossed the Saint Lawrence in canoes under the lead of Arnold and Montgomery, to attack Quebec, or joined in the attack on the Hessians at Trenton, or endured the pangs of famine and frost at Valley Forge, had also, twenty years before, rushed upon the defences at Louisburg, or under the command of Wolfe, struggled up the cliffs to the Heights of Abraham, or marched with Washington through the dense forests of western Pennsylvania to the field of Braddock's defeat. To say that the record of this town in that long struggle was distinguished and honorable, is but to faintly praise where words of enthusiastic eulogy are appropriate. In a period of nine years, its population was more than decimated by the fatalities of that war. Such a record is of great and unparalleled significance, and imports that here resided a race of heroic men, whose martial virtues were not inferior to any that ever inspired the strains of the lyric muse. In 1757, the fortunes of England in America reached their lowest ebb. For more than two years, disasters had huddled thick upon her arms. At Fort Du Quesne; at Oswego; at Fort William Henry, and throughout the whole of the Saint Lawrence valley, an almost unbroken succession of defeats had reduced her prospects here to the verge of despair. And, at home, the gloom which settled on the face of affairs was scarcely less deep and rayless than that of one hundred years before, when the guns of the Dutch fleet were heard in the Thames. It was at this moment that the elder Pitt,

the great commoner, seized the reins of power which fell from the nerveless grasp of the "Whig aristocracy." In less than four years, he restored the military glory of his country to the pitch it had attained by the genius of Marlborough, and gave to England an influence in the politics of the world which she had not enjoyed since the days of Oliver Cromwell. The most brilliant of the series of victories by which these results were accomplished was the conquest of Canada. To the conquest of Canada, no portion of the British people contributed so much as the province of Massachusetts Bay, and no portion of the people of this province contributed more of men and money according to their numbers than the people of the town of Grafton.

When we read the astounding fact that eighty of her sons out of a population of 750 died in this war, we feel the intense meaning of Col. Barré's immortal speech in the house of commons: "They protected by your arms? They have nobly taken up arms in your defence; have exerted a valor amid their constant and laborious industry, for the defence of a country *whose frontier was drenched in blood*, while its interior yielded all its little savings to your emoluments."

When we turn the leaf which embalms the deeds of this town in the war of the revolution, we find equal cause for pride and exultation. Grafton sent forth no conspicuous leader to the councils, and furnished no battlefield in that great debate. She contributed no Washington, no Adams, no Warren, no Ward, and it was not here that —

"The embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world."

But no people in the colonies caught the echo of that shot with more quick and responsive ear. Before the sun had set on that 19th day of April, 1775, a full company of nearly one hundred men, with Rev. Mr. Grosvenor, their pastor, in the ranks, were in rapid march to the front. On every bloody field, from Bunker Hill to Yorktown, the sons of this town dared or tasted death in the cause of independence. But the contest of the American colonies of Great Britain with the mother country was not specially distinguished by the valor of the Continental troops. There was no deficiency in that respect, but there have been more remarkable instances of human courage and endurance than any displayed in that war. The long contest of the Netherlands with the mighty armaments of Spain, forty-three years in duration, recorded in the glowing and eloquent pages of Motley, presents an instance far more striking and wonderful of a brave people, in the sacred cause of liberty, maintaining an unequal contest through more than a generation, and carrying it to a triumphant issue against intrenched power and vast resources. It was not very wonderful that three million people, situated in a country of such resources as this, and remote from Europe, especially in alliance with one of the great powers of the earth, should be able to wrest their independence from the mother country, whose people were not completely united in policy. But what is unexampled in this great contest, what the file affords absolutely no precedent for, was the calm and conservative wisdom which marked all the councils of the revolt. The colonists were

not revolutionists indeed, but rather conservatives. They were not fighting to establish new reforms, but to preserve ancient liberties. They had no constitutions in the sense in which we use the term, and yet in all their public utterances and state papers they perpetually refer to their constitutions, and appeal to the principles of those constitutions.

By their constitutions the people of this province meant the Magna Charta, the declaration of rights of 1688, and the bill of rights of 1689, and all that body of law found in the preambles of ancient statutes and in the decisions of courts, whereby the liberties of Englishmen were declared and secured everywhere. They believed those principles were embodied by necessary implication in the charter of 1629, and in the new charter of 1691. I cannot develop and must not stop to dwell on this topic. They were a race of constitutional lawyers. Burke said of them: "In this character of the Americans, a love of freedom is the predominating feature which marks and distinguishes the whole. This fierce spirit of liberty is stronger in the English colonies, probably, than in any other people of the earth." And Chatham, in 1775, thus characterized their public papers: "When your lordships look at the papers transmitted to us from America, when you consider their decency, firmness and wisdom, you cannot but respect their cause and wish to make it your own. For myself I must declare and avow that in all my reading and observation—and it has been my favorite study—I have read Thucydides and have admired the master states of the world—that

for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the general congress at Philadelphia." Now the same characteristics which marked the emanations of the greater bodies, and so much challenged the admiration of the great statesman, will be found in less degree in the humble records of the proceedings of the New England towns. I have adverted to this subject to say that right here, in the volumes containing the proceedings of this town in 1774 and '75, will be found undying evidence of the existence here of that "fierce spirit of liberty" which Burke discovered, coupled with the temperate wisdom and practical sagacity which commanded the applause of Chatham. A single illustration is all I can allow myself. I refer to the report of a committee adopted by the town, January 4, 1774, and having reference to a communication from Boston, sent out upon the occasion of the destruction of tea in Boston harbor. It is in these words: "The town of Grafton, taking into consideration the unhappy circumstances that this country are involved in at the present crisis, attempts being repeatedly made infringing upon our rights and privileges, which we consider justly alarming to all the true friends of our happy constitution, which hath been so dearly purchased, and which we esteem to be our most invaluable interest and rights as Englishmen, which we have ever gloried in, more particularly at the glaring injustice of the East India Company being allowed to send tea to America, while subject to a duty

payable in America, which we view as subversive of our rights as Christians; as subjects, and as loyal subjects of our most gracious King George, whose name and person we ever desire to view as sacred. Therefore, Resolved, as the people of this town, that any one individual, or any body of men, that shall encourage, aid, or assist in importing or receiving any such tea or any other article while subject to a duty, the sole purpose whereof is to raise money to appropriate to any sordid measure, or any use whatever contrary to our just rights of distributing our own property wherewith God and Nature hath made us free, can but be viewed as criminal to our country, as well as to the mother state, and must be so viewed by us. Resolved, that this town are in duty bound to join with and assist our sister towns and colonies in this our common cause, so as we may be instrumental under God of handing down that liberty to our posterity which hath been kept so long inviolate and preserved by our worthy ancestors. Resolved, that the substance of the proceedings of the town of Boston and other towns in their respective town meetings (relative to said affair) which have been published and come to our knowledge, are in our apprehension consistent with truth and our happy constitution, and we can but wish prosperity may attend all laudable stands, so that our glorious constitution may yet be handed down to posterity inviolate. But to adopt any measures where private advantage or sinister ends are apparently at the bottom, and who make this though ever so glorious a foundation for their

avarice and *emolument* we cannot but must detest and abhor."

The syntax of this document will not bear examination, but the record presents an interesting type of the class of the counsels that prevailed everywhere. It exhibits in the sons the same characteristics which predominated in the fathers who settled the town—clear, practical common sense, a people who knew their rights and the exact extent and limits and grounds of them; a people who believed that liberty was not an abstraction but inhered in a sensible object—a people who could not be surprised nor driven into vain excesses, and who proposed as their ancestors had done, to govern themselves, but by no means to commit society to any untried and dangerous theories of abstract rights, that rested not upon the solid basis of precedent. But our ancestors were not always right. What Emerson said of Concord is true of Grafton, "If the good counsel prevailed, the sneaking counsel did not fail to be suggested." You will find if you search the musty records, that while most of the men whose blood flows in your veins were staunch in the just cause, others of your ancestors, perhaps, were obstinate, obstructive and wrong-headed. If the question came up on paying the minute-men for the time they spent in learning the military art and for their accoutrements, you may find some of your kindred, whose names you would prefer not to see in that conspicuous eminence, sullenly protesting against the scheme, perhaps suspicious that it savored too much of "measures where private advantage and

sinister ends were at the bottom." But tories were exceeding scarce, and although I find an honored name of one who was cashiered as agent to procure recruits for the town, "because he was not firm and friendly to the State," yet I believe he was restored within a few months. And you know that when the question of the adoption of the United States constitution came up, the people of this town and vicinity, concurring with the mistaken views of many veteran patriots of the Revolution, rejected by a very large majority that Union which, in the next age, their posterity were destined so gloriously to defend. I have left myself no time, nor was it a part of my design, to enter upon any consideration of Grafton's relation to the war for the Union. If the record of fatalities did not reach the unparalleled extent of the old French war, the roll of your volunteers was swelled far beyond every requirement of the government. For nearly every eight men your quota called for, you furnished, out of the abundance of your patriotism, an additional man.

Your eminence in this particular received ample recognition from the commonwealth, when its chief magistrate said, in measured words: "I feel bound in truth and justice to say that no other town appears to have contributed to the late war a larger proportion than yours of its treasures and its men." I am speaking to those who helped to make the record. I know how appropriate the theme is; but I could not adequately treat it. To what examples of ancient or modern valor could I refer to set in more striking light your own? The

mind reverts to Marathon; to Platea; and to the pass in the Locrian mountains, where the three hundred Spartans with their few allies, held at bay a million barbarians.

The literature and art of twenty-five centuries has invested these examples of heroism with imperishable glory. No immortal literature has yet wrought its spell upon your deeds. The long arts of sculpture and painting have not familiarized the eyes of seventy generations with your achievements. Perhaps the conditions under which you and your comrades wrought and endured are not favorable to the representations of art, and the Achilles of the civil war may never find his Homer. But I know of nothing in the quality of your valor, in the circumstances under which it was displayed, in the motives which actuated it, or in the results it achieved, to belittle it in comparison with the classic models of antiquity. The Greeks, trained in war from their infancy, on those renowned fields, confronted a foe formidable only in numbers, to preserve for a few precious decades a small tract of mountainous country, until their genius might create and transmit to other ages and other races a body of wonderful literature, monuments of unequalled art, and examples of politics and governments, of the highest interest to mankind. You fought without previous military training, against an equal foe, in the cause of human liberty, inspired with a lofty sentiment of national integrity, and to the end, in the immortal language of Lincoln, "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, might not

perish from the earth." To quote the language of your great military chieftain, addressed to you at the close, "Your marches, sieges and battles, in distance, duration, resolution, and brilliancy of results, dim the lustre of the world's past military achievements, and will be the patriot's precedent in defence of liberty and the right in all time to come."

I have said the first settlers of the town were remarkable for their sturdy sense and practical business capacity, and for these their descendants have continued to be distinguished. It would be invidious to name the living, and difficult to select, for special mention, from the long roll of Grafton's sons who have united with a lofty spirit of patriotism the practical wisdom of men of affairs. They are found, in no insignificant numbers, in the ranks of those by whom the great business interests of the country are managed. Of profound and brilliant scholars, of eminent statesmen and orators, the town has no list to present. In the main, heretofore, the genius her children have displayed is the genius of honest industry, perseverance, courage, Yankee sense, the capacity to gain solid acquirements, and to use them about the practical business of life, the genius of the true artisans who have wrought out the great material progress and prosperity of the age. And if the past of the town is secure, the present and future are also luminous with hope and promise. It is true that causes, which need not be enumerated, tend to mass population about great industrial centres, and the country town suffers an apparent diminution of importance. If it is a question of

valuation for the purposes of taxation; if it is a question of comparative gain of population; if it is a question of relative municipal importance, your town has lost the race. But the true worth of a town is not measured by its valuation list, any more than the true wealth of a man is measured by his weight avoirdupois. When the New York Sun wanted to say the most disparaging thing it could think of about General Hancock, it said he was a good man and weighed 250 pounds. If it is a question what opportunities are here afforded to lead a rational existence; to appreciate intelligently the great pageant of human life as it moves before the eye; to cultivate and expand your own powers; to furnish the minds of your children with correct opinions, and fill their hearts with noble sentiments; in short, to enjoy all the blessings of civil liberty, at what period of Grafton's history were her prospects more attractive? In 1735, Grafton was what it had been in the days of Hubbard, "a place up into the woods beyond Medfield and Mendon."

The Grafton of 1885 is near the centre of a republic of fifty-five millions of people. The distance of your fathers of the year 1800 from their rural county seat was greater than yours, at present, from the great city, then a straggling town, now a vast mart of trade and the "mother of arts and eloquence." Taking into account the conveniences and comforts of modern methods of travel, as well as the element of time, you are nearer to New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, than your fathers were to their provincial capital. "No pent up

Utica contracts your powers, but the whole boundless continent is yours." And it is yours in other senses than that it is accessible. The old charters of Charles, and of William and Mary, granted to the province of Massachusetts Bay all the land lying between a north line three miles north of the Merrimack and a south line three miles south of the Charles, and extending westward to the South Sea. There was an unconscious prophecy in the vague terms of the ancient grants. The royal grantors could deliver but a small part of the vast region they covered by the premises of their parchment. But what the royal signet could not give title to the grantees and their children have, nevertheless, possessed. The great West is but a larger New England and a more distinguished Massachusetts. Even the great South, so long shut up against the influence of your free institutions, beholds the coming day. Even there,—

" Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops."

The new South means a South which shall yield to the genial influences of New England, such as our fathers planted here and which have created the greatness of the North and the West. Meanwhile, over your noble hills and through your lovely valleys, "Heaven's breath smells wooingly," your ample fields have not sensibly abated their fertility, and your thriving villages are vigorous as of old. Your model free schools and your noble library open wide their portals and extend their inestimable benefits to the rich and poor alike. No

child is born within your borders in circumstances so abject and miserable that the beneficent institutions you have established and maintain will not unlock at the bidding of his diligence and ability, every door that leads to wealth and honorable fame. Standing at the apex of the second century, reverting to the past and peering into the future, we can discover only reasons for profound gratitude to the founders of the ancient town, and to their heroic successors in every generation, who have preserved for us so noble a heritage.



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